

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. WOLVES IN PANNA NATIONAL PARK

On a hot afternoon at the end of February 1996, while studying the ecology of sloth bears in Panna National Park, my supervisor Dr. A.J.T. Johnsingh saw two handsome wolves, at a place about two km from my camp at Talgaon village, close to the southern boundary of the Park. Unfortunately I was not with him. Since then, I had been longing to see a wolf in Panna, as I had never seen one before.

The next winter, during mid December 1996, I sighted a pack of four wolves about one km from my camp, about two o'clock in the afternoon closer to the southern boundary of Talgaon village crossing the road towards the village. They ran on seeing me. I followed them through the *Lantana* bushes for about 100 m till they disappeared. Two of them were slightly smaller than the other two, and their sex could not be identified. After looking out for them for a while, I returned to radio tracking sloth bears. That evening, when I returned to my camp I was told by a field assistant that the wolves had gone to the outskirts of the village and killed a cattle calf in broad daylight. The calf had been grazing in a fallow field along with several other calves.

During that winter, until mid February 1997, I continued to find evidence of the wolves' presence — tracks, scats — and once heard a howl. I came across 8 scats of wolves along roads and cattle trails. I conducted on the spot analyses to identify the major prey remains in the scats. I found thick locks of hair of black goats in 6 scats, and two possibly contained cattle hair. The scats were very similar to those of dholes, which were also found in Panna. However, the accompanying tracks (wolves have proportionately larger pads) helped in distinguishing them as wolf scats.

All the scats were collected within a radius of 4 km around Talgaon village. This area falls in my intensive study area, and sampling could have been disproportionate due to that. However,

based on the sightings of others and my occasional visits to other areas of the Park, which have abundant potential prey, I formed the idea that they occur only along the periphery of the forests or occupy the areas around human settlements. Other places from where they have been reported are near the village of Jhalar, inside the park and Hinota, which is on the periphery. The villages inside Panna have a large population of livestock, as the villagers are traditionally dependent upon them for their livelihood. The landscape of Panna and the forests around it is basically a mosaic of forest, open scrub and villages.

Such a landscape must have provided adequate resources for long ranging species like the wolf to survive over the years. Jhala (1993) states that scrubland and grassland of the semi-arid parts of peninsular India are the preferred habitats of the Indian wolf. They do not occur in closed forests, but sometimes inhabit the periphery of such forests.

During the last year I was in Panna, I could find evidence of wolf only during the winter (post monsoon) season. An interesting event here is the presence of a large number of immigrant cattle inside the Park during the postmonsoon season, when forage is abundant. This seasonal movement of livestock might have been a traditional practice over several centuries, though recently this has been controlled to a great extent by the Park authorities. I interviewed the local cattle grazers and shepherds who said that the wolves were seen frequently only during the winter, mostly preying upon goats and cattle calves, and were a menace to their livestock. This supported my observation that these wolves used areas around Talgaon only seasonally.

The two sightings we have had were of a group of two and four. Local people also said that they had mostly seen them in groups of not more than four. Jhala (1993) observes that wolves

that subsist on domestic livestock in other parts of India form smaller packs (1-4 individuals) in contrast to the ones that subsist on wild prey (6-14 individuals). In Panna, interestingly, the wolves occur along with dhole in the same area. However, I sighted dholes only infrequently and only in less disturbed, denser parts of Panna. Thus, the preferred habitats of these two species seem to vary. Generally, it is believed that these

large, similar sized canids segregate their habitats due to interspecific competition. But in places like Panna, where the landscape is a mosaic of habitats providing niches for both the species, they are found to occur together.

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REFERENCE

JHALA, Y.V. (1993): An update on the status, distribution and ecology of the Indian wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*). International Wolf Symposium, Leon, Spain.

2. OCCURRENCE OF THE WOLF *CANIS LUPUS PALLIPES* LINN. IN SIDHI DISTRICT, MADHYA PRADESH

In *JBNHS* 93 (1): 81, I read an article by Shri A.M.K. Bharos mentioning the sighting of a solitary wolf in March, 1993 while travelling in Chhuhiyaghat on the border of Rewa and Sidhi districts.

I have also sighted a solitary wolf, which in all probability was a large male, on the outskirts of the Dhubri Sanctuary situated in the western part of Sidhi district in Madhya Pradesh,

in February, 1981.

I have also seen a female wolf, in rather poor condition, on the road to Chiklod in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh, in the monsoon of 1982.

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3. THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION IN EXTERMINATION: FRESH EVIDENCE ON THE CHEETAH (*ACINONYX JUBATUS*) IN INDIA

The chronology and sequence of the extermination of the Asiatic cheetah provided in the only full length work on the subject relies on books and journal records. However, as the author admits it is often not possible 'to ascribe a definite date' as these are not given in the texts. Secondly, the giving out of rewards for killing adult cheetahs and cubs was widely practised from at least 1871 onwards, but this information is mainly in the archival records. By consulting such records, it is possible to fill gaps in the chronology of extinction. The fact that government money was given out meant that

skins had to be shown as proof. Unfortunately, 'leopards and cheetahs' are often listed together. But by eliminating all such instances and selecting only figures from files where 'cheetahs' and 'leopards' are listed separately, it is possible to revise the estimated number of cheetahs killed in India. Divyabhanusinh (1995: 197-205) gives us a total of 127 cheetahs that were captured, killed, painted or photographed between 1800-1950. This thoroughly researched list does not include those killed for rewards. The total as shown in Tables 1 and 2 comes to not less than 70 cheetahs in addition to his figure. It is possible